

# The DELIVERANCE OF JERUSALEM

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E. W. G. MASTERMAN, M. D., F. R. C. S.

*Author of "Studies in Galilee" and Hon. Gen. Sec.  
of the Palestine Exploration Fund in Palestine*

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BY

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## INTRODUCTION

IN the summer of 1914 the position of things in Palestine was entirely peaceful, and certainly among the English, American and French any idea that things could ever come to hostility between themselves and the Germans and Austrians, or even more with the Turks, would have seemed preposterous. The members of the different religious communities were in friendly co-operation, and at public gatherings connected with either Mission Schools or Hospitals, members of each community attended as a matter of course. The meetings or excavations of the P.E.F., the lectures of the German Biblical Archæological Society, of the American Archæological Society, and of the Dominican Fathers of the French University of St. Etienne were attended by the studios of the various communities as a matter of course, and new discoveries and points of view were shared by all.

Shortly before the war an excellent "International Health Bureau" was started under German stimulus and connected with the Hamburg School of Tropical Medicine. Representatives of all the leading Powers co-operated to make it a success, and the director, a German Professor, made every effort to obtain British official support. At the German schools at Jerusalem and Beirut, British and American children attended for years and seemed to be welcomed by the head teachers with friendliness.

With regard to the native people of the land the Syrian people have by tradition been uniformly friendly to the British, French and Americans. Perhaps in Palestine, on the whole, the British were the most looked to; in Syria proper, *e.g.*, Beirut, Damascus and the Lebanon, the French and Americans. Unquestionably, in spite of (or perhaps partly because of) all the pomp and show of the Kaiser's visit to Palestine—well calculated to impress the Oriental mind—the mass of the people remained decidedly pro-British, and to a considerable extent even anti-German, except among the circle who had had the benefit of their excellent institutions. The mere fact that the German Government was known to be so intimate with the Turks of Constantinople only bred suspicion of them in the minds of the people.

It must never be forgotten that the Syrian people are not Turks either ethnologically, linguistically, or in character and temperament. The Turks—as far as the original stock goes—are all of Turanian origin; the Syrians are Semites, at least predominantly, with a mixture of Greek and other strains. As regards language, the language of the Turks, though written in Arabic characters, is in every way distinct from Arabic. Few Syrians outside Government circles in Palestine know Turkish, and their native language (Arabic), of which they are justly proud, is banned by the Government who transact all their business—or did before the war—in Turkish or French. Students at the Syrian Protestant College at Beirut wishing to get their government diplomas in medicine or pharmacy, were not allowed to present themselves for examination in their own language, but in Turkish or French. All legal documents had to be drawn up in



Turkish. The Syrian having legal business had to engage an interpreter just as if he were a foreigner. The Turk never indeed ceased to treat the Syrians as a vanquished people, and the land as a conquered one.

The Governors sent from Constantinople were almost without exception Turks, and knew only Turkish or French, sometimes indeed only the former. Their period of appointment was precarious and always short, and the condition of obtaining and retaining their appointment was that of replenishing the coffers at Stamboul. As he had to bribe to get his appointment, he naturally had to make money by bribes, and in a descending scale every official from the highest to the lowest had to get and keep his position by bribes. For the benefit of the land little or no money was spent, and when an absolutely necessary work had to be undertaken, for example, construction of a road, only a fraction of the money gathered for that work was spent on that purpose, the rest went to the officials. It is not wonderful that such a system was detested, and nothing but a military domination, helped by the feeling of the Moslems that loyalty to Islam forbade any possible Christian control from outside, kept the people from rebellion. Perhaps one may add that their state of chronic poverty and overwork prevented them from any initiation of schemes for better things.

Nevertheless, when the young Turks first got control and the "constitution" or *harriyeh* (freedom) was established, the Syrians thought the day of better things had come. The new era was welcomed amidst scenes of the wildest enthusiasm and none extolled the change more than the Christians and Jews, who had suffered most. Had the Turks really had the true

elements of a spirit of just administration, they might before this have made Syria and Palestine happy and prosperous provinces. The first heavy blow was when the Christians and Jews (hitherto exempt) were forced into military service, which for them, more accustomed to better social conditions, was a real hardship; yet many Syrian Christians and Jews, carried away by the ideal of a new era of liberty, gladly went to do their part. At this time many of the Jewish colonists became thoroughly Turcophile (in a good sense) and in the Balkan wars those who had hoped for better days were discouraged and saddened at Turkish misfortunes.

But soon it dawned upon all that they had but changed an ignorant and fanatic despot for a set of clever knaves who, having seized the government, seemed to have no interest in anything but political adventures at Constantinople or their personal advantage. Many migrated to Egypt and yearning hopes were freely expressed that France or England would do something to lift the darkening shadows from the land. The British Government had all along made it known that they had no desire for any change that would lead to dismemberment of the Turkish Empire, and all expressions of hope that England would intervene were finally damped. Undoubtedly, it was the wish of British Government circles to do nothing to break up the Empire or annex any part of it. At the beginning of the war with Germany, the British Ambassador was instructed to inform the Turkish Government that it would guarantee the integrity of the Turkish Empire at the end of the war if Turkey would remain neutral. There is no shadow of doubt that had the mass of people in Turkey been consulted,

they would have given a vote by an immense majority against the war. Unfortunately, her rulers, stimulated by promises of the restoration of lost lands, especially Egypt—which had never been really hers for a century—and doubtless compensated more personally in the usual oriental method, determined to bring their resources to the help of Germany, who, they felt sure, would soon prove the winning side.



# THE DELIVERANCE OF JERUSALEM

## CHAPTER I

### THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR

FROM the moment of Germany's invasion of Belgium Turkey began to mobilise, but the poor ignorant soldiers had little idea indeed for what purpose. The interval between mobilisation and declaration of war with the Allies was utilised by the resident official Germans and young Turks in a strong pro-German propaganda, and the religious feelings of the Moslems were worked up by the statement, freely distributed in Arabic circulars, that Germans were not Christians like the French or English, but followers of the Prophet Mohammed, and passages from the Koran were quoted prophesying the coming of the Kaiser as the Saviour of Islam. The Kaiser himself was publicly prayed for in the Mosques as "Haji Wilhelm," the title Haji being one applied only, as a rule, to a Moslem. Telegrams printed in Arabic were circulated giving accounts of endless German victories. Doubtless, it must be admitted, the fact that Russia was once again in arms against Turkey did much to reconcile the Syrians towards the war.

A very partially organised Army of some 150,000 soldiers—chiefly Syrians—was collected around Beer-

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sheba and all was excitement over the expected easy conquest of Egypt.

Then came the fiasco in 1915 of the first attack on the Suez Canal, when 20,000 Turks were easily driven back, losing their guns and a couple of thousand prisoners. This disaster, when the truth was known—it was hidden for a time by lying Turkish official reports—caused such a revulsion among the people of the land that a general massacre of the Germans was freely talked about. Had the Allies been in a position at that moment to land a force on the coast, probably the whole country would have rallied to them.

Meanwhile the state of the land was rapidly going from worse to worse. The food all over the land was commandeered for the armies, even the small stores which people in the villages had saved to carry them through the winter months were taken from them, so that starvation occurred in many districts. Typhus and cholera played havoc through the land. Locusts, in incredible numbers, ravished the land from end to end: a plague on a scale which had never before occurred within living memory. Man power had all been requisitioned for the armies, and trade and business were brought to a standstill. Sad to say, to provide fuel for the rapidly increasing railway traffic required by the military authorities, the scanty trees of Palestine, including even beautiful olive groves, were widely destroyed.

Although reports of the awful state of things came through, it was impossible to send adequate help, and monies forwarded to Palestine, if delivered at all, were so diminished in amount before delivery, as to make it seem almost a waste to send them.

Meanwhile the Turks and Germans were organis-



ing fresh attacks on Egypt, and for that purpose constructing military roads and railways. The railway through central Palestine, which before the war had only reached Samaria, was pushed southward to Beersheba and into the desert to *el Auja*; another branch from *el Tineh* station in the Philistine Plain was carried south-eastward almost to Gaza. The Jaffa-Jerusalem railway, after its linking up with the central line, was disconnected with Jaffa by taking up the rails for some miles. New roads were made, the chief of which ran southwards from Jerusalem through Hebron to Beersheba and beyond, from Jerusalem to Aman east of the Jordan, and also from *Akka* via *Sxfed* to Damascus.

Another attack on Egypt in 1916 was equally disastrous for the Turks. Indeed, it is hardly possible to believe that the German military authorities seriously believed that such an expedition could have had favourable results, but they probably aimed at immobilising in Egypt forces which otherwise would be used against them elsewhere, and in this it must be admitted they succeeded.

At length in the Spring of 1917, General Sir Archibald Murray, whose Army had fought its way to *el Katia*, to *el Arish* and was collected at *Wady Ghusseh*, made an attack upon Gaza, which, although carried out with great heroism, appears to have failed chiefly through insufficient forces and guns. The first attack was made on March 26th, when the troops were delayed by fog and great difficulties with the water supply. The second attack, begun on April 17th, appears to have fallen just short of a success and was not pushed home on account of the great strength of the enemy's positions and the inevitable great losses

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that would have ensued. In Jerusalem there was at the time a general expectation that the British would certainly be shortly through, and preparations were nearly complete for evacuating Jerusalem when, to the relief of the Governor, Jamal Pasha, the British withdrew.

Then came the slow months of preparation for an advance which should be, it was purposed, overpowering. Slowly the British Army organised a vast system of supply: water by means of pipes was brought from Egypt, and material of all possible kinds poured in by means of the railway they had constructed.

The attack in April had, unfortunately, come at the very end of the rainy season, and for six months it was impossible to count on any fresh rain. The Army all those long and trying six months were situated in a most difficult position. A region almost waterless, a sultry, almost tropical climate, and a long extended desert front from Gaza to Beersheba on the general line of the dry torrent bed known as Wady Ghuzzeh. The whole of the supplies had to come by a light railway over what had been but a few months before an almost deserted desert road through sand hills. Behind the greater part of our line lay a perfectly arid, waterless desert—to all intents uninhabitable. At the rear of the enemy lay miles and miles of green fields with abundant corn and barley. Around Gaza was a rich oasis with palm trees and olives and fruit trees, and all the resources of Palestine to draw upon at their hand. The dominating hills or "tells" were in the hands of the Turks and heavily fortified.

By this time the Turks were furnished with great numbers of heavy guns and the very latest aeroplanes. Their forces were largely officered by Germans and



Austrians. Abundant ammunition was accumulated, and by means of their roads and railways their communications behind their lines were fully provided for. The chaotic confusion which seems to have attended their first advance had given way under German supervision to higher organisation, and holding, as they did, all the natural water supply in the district, vast tracts of corn-growing land for fodder and for food, internal communications by roads and railways, as well as very adequate numbers of highly trained and undoubtedly extremely brave soldiers, it is no wonder that they had come to consider their position as impregnable.

## CHAPTER II

### BEERSHEBA

AT the threshold of the British advance into Palestine lay two towns that have been through historic times the gates between Egypt and the East. They are Beersheba and Gaza. Beersheba, or as the modern Arabs call it *Bir-es-saba*, has during this present war sprung into life and notoriety after a sleep of centuries.

Famous as a sacred shrine in the days of Abraham (Gen. xxi. 33), and associated with incidents in the life of Hagar (Gen. xxi. 17), Isaac (Gen. xxvi. 24), Jacob (Gen. xlv. 2), and Elijah (1 Kings xix. 5), Beersheba is perhaps most familiar to us as the extreme southern town of Canaan. From "Dan to Beersheba," or from "Beersheba to Dan," are constantly recurring phrases in the Bible. South and east of Beersheba the land is little but a wilderness; northward and north-westwards we pass into districts which in the spring are great corn and pasture lands.

Beersheba itself occupies a fertile, though treeless, expanse on the course of a great valley, which after running south from Hebron as the *Wady el-Khalil* here turns westwards under the name of *Wady es-Srba*, and still further west deepens into the *Wady Ghuzzeh* or the Valley of Gaza. The original site of the town of Beersheba (or Sheba) of Old Testament times was upon a lofty hill some three miles east of the present town. This hill is known as *Tell es-Saba*, and upon it we have the superimposed remains of successive occupations from the Seleucid period backwards

through Hebrew times to still earlier ages. Deposits of pottery enable archæologists to infer that this site was occupied altogether for considerably over a thousand years. Like all these ancient sites, it is a place of great natural strength.

After the Seleucid period a new town was built on the lower and better watered ground where the modern buildings now are; the soil here is richly strewn with Roman and Byzantine remains, among which the foundations of two Byzantine churches and several interesting inscriptions on slabs of stone have been recovered. All this civilisation decayed after the Arab conquest, and the site was utterly deserted—except by wandering Bedouin—until very recent years. The adventurous tourist who wandered far from the settled country did so at some considerable risk, and the accounts of the discovery there by Professor George Robinson, of Chicago, of seven choked up wells was read with great interest when published a few years ago. (See "Biblical World" XVII., 247ff.) It may be mentioned, however, that Beersheba does not mean, as many suppose, the "Seven Wells" (actually there are more than seven ancient wells at this site), but most probably the "Well of the Seven," or, as is suggested in Gen. xxi. 31, "The Well of the Oath."

Only a few years before the outbreak of war, the Turks decided to strengthen their southern frontier, and at the same time civilise and subdue the wandering Bedouin of this district. They cleared the wells of rubbish and, by establishing oil-engine pumps, obtained from them a perennial supply of good water. They built a Serai or Government House, a mosque, a post and telegraph office, and a Khan. Encouraged by

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the security thus afforded, a number of merchants built shops until the settled population must, before 1914, have reached upwards of one thousand. The houses and streets were well supplied with water, and a number of eucalyptus trees were planted. An unusually enlightened Turkish Kaimakam or Governor, who really had his heart in his work, managed to convert this district into a little oasis of prosperity, where shortly before there had been nothing but desert. The small town, with its smart new red-roofed buildings, its garrison of Turkish cavalry, and its revived life, was a pleasant contrast to the stagnation, desertion, and ruin of a few years previously.

A part of the same movement for strengthening their frontier led the Turks to develop another ancient site, *el Auja*, several miles further south in the desert. Here, too, they established a garrison and a market for the Bedouin.

Since the outbreak of the war Beersheba has come into much greater prominence as the chief depot for the troops and stores accumulated for the attack on Egypt. It was strongly fortified by the Turks during the British advance from Egypt. It was soon connected up with Hebron and Jerusalem by an excellent carriage road, which was later prolonged south to *el Auja*. The southward extension of the Haifa-Damascus Railway, which before the war was begun from *Afuleh*, in the Plain of Esdraelon, and was intended to link up with the Jaffa-Jerusalem Railway at Ramleh, was now speedily pushed on to Beersheba and beyond. This place thus became of great strategic importance as the place of junction of the main road through Central Palestine with the railway traversing the maritime plain.

The *Negeb*, translated in the Bible usually as "the South" (see Gen. xii. 9; xiii. 1-3; xx. 5, &c.), is generally considered as beginning at Edh Dhahriyeh, and stretches south in a series of rolling hills running in a general direction east and west, until the actual wilderness begins—a distance of perhaps seventy miles. Besides Beersheba and *el Auja* there are important ruins, "*Khalasa*" (Elusa) and "*Ruheibeh*" (Rehoboth), and probably in its palmy days—the Byzantine period—there were between these four settlements as many as 50,000 people, but it has never, even at its best, been anything but a rather barren land.

Shortly before the war the Palestine Exploration Fund, acting with the War Office, obtained permission for a complete survey of this district in order to connect up their Palestine Survey with that of Egypt. This was done in the spring of 1914; the maps have not yet been published, but have been of very great value during the war. On the edge of the *Wady Ghuzzeh*, on the southern road from Gaza to Beersheba, stands *Tel Abu Hareira*, a very large mound, partially natural, but with its side steepened artificially. It consists of a central citadel mound and a lower part on which once stood a town. There is a quantity of pottery on the surface, but no excavations have yet been made to show what ancient town stood there. Five miles west of Beersheba, where the road crosses *Wady Abu Irgeig*, are two small "tells" side by side, known as *Abu Irgeig*, around which are the remains of a large Byzantine village, the cemetery of which lies a little to the north of the road. It is probable that there is here also the site of a still earlier occupation. Both these sites came into prominence in the recent military operations.

## CHAPTER III

### GAZA

**G**AZA, at the extreme eastern end of the Turkish line of defence, is a city of great historic importance. It has been aptly described as "the outpost of Africa and the door of Asia." It is situated in a veritable oasis, and is the last well-watered place in the long desert journey from Syria to Egypt. A description made a few years ago of the fruitfulness of the oasis will give some idea of modern conditions before war had wrought much destruction.

\* "Gardens of fruit-trees, olive-groves, and enclosures, hedged by the prickly pear, reached our camp from the inland side. The trees at Gaza are chiefly date-palms, olive, sycamore-fig, carob or locust-tree, and fig; a very handsome tamarisk reaches a height of thirty or forty feet and has light green foliage, very refreshing and homelike after the dull grey or lifeless green of the desert. The olives are of enormous age. The average height of the trees is twenty to twenty-five or thirty feet. Old trees have often mere shells of their trunks remaining. I measured the two largest I saw, a few miles north of Gaza; their girth was eighteen and twenty feet respectively at two feet from the ground, a size which was maintained, or very nearly so, till the trunk forked."

Amidst this plenty, the city itself is of no great pretensions. Its population is about 40,000, of whom

\* From the Paper by Mr. H. C. Hart, in the Quarterly Statement of the Palestine Exploration Fund, October, 1885.



all but a thousand or so are Moslems. The people have always been rather Egyptian in their life and ways, and the women here and in this district dress more like Egyptians than Syrians. The most important building in the town is the *Jamia-el-Kebir* or great Mosque, which was originally a Christian Church, built in the thirteenth century out of ancient material, its western door is a fine specimen of Italian Gothic. To the southeast of Gaza lies *Jebel-el-Muntar*, 270 feet above sea level, which is by tradition the site to which Samson carried the gates of the Philistines. (Judges xvi. 2.) The district round Gaza is very fertile and great quantities of barley, transshipped direct from the sandy seashore, two miles from the town, to English ships, were carried annually to England; it is said, that in 1910 no less than 8,000 boxes of Gaza oranges were exported to England in the same way.

The British Army, in entering Palestine through this town, are repeating again the events of history extending over thousands of years. Nearly 3,600 years ago the great Thothmes III. was for some time held up at Gaza when advancing from Egypt to conquer Canaan, and succeeding Egyptian Kings held this city as the outpost of their land. In the days of the Philistines, Gaza was one of their great cities and was dedicated to their god "Marnas."

When Assyria held Canaan their Kings fortified Gaza against Egypt until some centuries later, when the position was reversed and Pharaoh Necho again made this city an Egyptian outpost. Here Cambyses, King of Persia, in 529 B.C., after the fall of Babylon, was long delayed on his route to conquer Egypt. In 332 B.C. Gaza was strong enough to resist the siege of

Alexander the Great—who was here wounded—during two whole months, but after capture it was entirely destroyed. It was never, except for a very short time under Alexander Jannæus, in Jewish hands. Under the Romans it flourished as a free city, out-rivalling Damascus in prosperity, and being at one time the most populous city in Palestine. In 635 A.D. it fell to the arms of Abu Bekr and never fully recovered its prosperity under either Crusader or Turk.

It is interesting to notice that the same historical highway which brought to the Gates of Gaza Thothmes, Rameses, Sennacherib, Cambyses, Alexander, Pompey, Titus, Saladin, Napoleon and many generals, has now yielded to the advance of the mixed army under General Allenby of British, Irish, Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, Indians, and, in small contingents, French and Italians.

Napoleon's army started from El Katia (where the British Army practically started) on February 7th, 1799, reached El Arish the next day and captured the fort on the 20th; he occupied Khan Yunis on the 22nd, and on the 26th marched to Gaza, which surrendered, the garrison retreating to Jaffa. From there, after two days' rest, he resumed his march, reached *Esdud* (Ashdod) on March 1st and *Ramleh* the following day. He captured Jaffa on March 7th and reached Haifa on the 16th, commencing the siege of *Akka* on March 18th, where all his plans were thwarted by the British. His rapid and comparatively easy advance with a force of 13,000 is one which the British might well envy when they review the enormous preparations which have been preliminary to their present favourable situation.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE PLAINS OF PHILISTIA

**I**N their march northward the British troops have crossed the Plains of Philistia, which compose the southern section of the stretch of Maritime Plain which lies between the mountains and the sea along almost the whole of Palestine.

There is no section of this plain more fertile and none probably more naturally suitable for a battlefield and more used as such in the past. Along the whole seaboard lies a strip of yellow sand, blown up by the wind into great dunes, in some places coming inland to a width of two and a half miles, and ever slowly but steadily encroaching upon the fertile lands. In a few places, as at Askelon, the strip of sand dunes becomes narrow, but towards Gaza they are two miles wide and just south of Jaffa even wider. The plain inland from this consists of rolling downs, and it is only near the coast that it can be described as flat. The soil is brown but intersected with little gullies in the rich alluvial soil deposit in which the underlying shingle is exposed. They are crossed by three great wadies similar to the Wady Ghuzzeh, but not so deeply worn, which run from the Western mountains to the sea. During the greater part of the year, except near their mouths, these wadies are deep rents in the plain with dry, stony torrent beds, which offer, except at scanty bridges, considerable difficulties of passage. The most southern is the *Wady-el-Hesy*,

which commences due west of *edh Daharijeh*. It is probably chiefly famous outside Palestine on account of the great *Tel-el-Hesy*, which rises so abruptly from its southern bank that the winter torrents have cut away part of the hill itself. Professor Flinders Petrie, in 1890, visiting this site, at once realised from the appearance of the artificial section thus made, and the strata of ancient remains rich in pottery fragments thus exposed, that this was the site of an ancient city, and he was able, from his experience in archaeological work in Egypt, to provisionally assign to their correct dates, the various layers of rubbish which had accumulated on the original natural hill. From the position of the site and the historical data he concluded it was the ancient "*Lachesh*" which "throughout history played second to Gaza, now the outpost of Egypt, and now the frontier fortress of Syria." Soon afterwards Dr. F. J. Bliss, on behalf of the P.E.F., excavated a considerable section of the city, cutting, as it were, a slice out of the hill. The account of his work is published in detail in his book, "*A Mound of Many Cities*" (1898).

The mouth of *Wady-el-Hesy* lies almost exactly between Gaza and Askelon.

Askelon was the second greatest of the Philistine cities referred to in the lament over Saul: "Publish it not in the streets of Ashkalon" (2 Sam. i. 20). It has had a great and glorious history, to which its abundant ruins, now sand covered amid waving palms, bear witness. In the centre of the great semicircle of the Crusading walls—successors on the same foundation of those of Roman times—lies a great elongated mound, the site of the Philistine city. The sea has here—as the torrent did at *Tell el-Hesy*—worn

away parts of the mound, exposing upon the surface on an almost perpendicular cliff, the successive remains of the earliest civilisation.

“There lay bare, not a mere precipice of virgin rock, but layer upon layer of gradually accumulated debris overlying this, and going up to the surface many feet above our heads. It stretched along as far as we could see and, exposed as it was in this extraordinary way by the action of the sea, it seemed as if Nature had drawn a veil aside and we were allowed a peep behind the scenes of Philistine history. The writer has seen sea-washed sections elsewhere—in Melos, Naxos, Crete, and other islands of the Ægean Sea—but never in a guise so impressive as this.”—D. Mackenzie, *Quarterly Statement*, P.E.F., 1913.

Some day we may hope that from this spot may be recovered the archæological remains of the little-known civilisation of the Philistines. The Crusaders considered Askelon their most important post in S.W. Palestine, and contemporary Arabs described it as the “Bride of Syria” ! It is now almost as deserted as ancient Babylon or Nineveh.

Some twelve miles up the coast from here is the *Nahr* (river) *Sukereir*—the mouth of a Wady of the same name.

This Wady takes its rise in the Shephelah by three heads, the most important of which passes through *Beit-Jebrin*, the ancient Eleutheropolis, near which lies *Tell Sandahannah*, which was excavated by Dr. Bliss for the Palestine Exploration Fund some years ago, and proved to be the site of the ancient fortress-city of Mareshah (2 Chron. xi. 8, &c.). At *Beit-Jebrin* some exceedingly interesting tombs of the Greek

period were discovered by the Rev. J. P. Peters, D.D., of New York, the largest of which had paintings of animals all round its walls.

On the northernmost arm of this Wady, just after it enters the Plain is *Tell es Safi*, sometimes called *Tell es-Safiyah*. This lofty hill, with its gleaming white sides, is a prominent object from a considerable distance, and is undoubtedly the site of the fortress Blanche-Garde of the Crusaders; it is also very probably the site of the ancient Philistine city of Gath. The next ravine, *Wady es-Surar*, is the most important in all southern Palestine, as it, by both its branches, leads up into the central plateau of Judæa, in close proximity to Jerusalem. The northern branch starts near *er Ram*, the Ramah of Benjamin of the Old Testament, some four miles north of Jerusalem and running an ever-deepening course south-west, is crossed by the Jaffa-Jerusalem high road near *Kulonish*. The southern branch commences at the Plain of Rephaim, just south of Jerusalem, and runs a very winding course, and is at present of great importance, because up it runs the narrow track of the Jaffa-Jerusalem Railway. Both these branches and the main valley itself run very deeply between steep and lofty mountains, the centre of the valley being occupied by a stony torrent bed—always dry except during, or immediately after, heavy rain. The gorge passes abruptly into the lower ground—the Shephelah—close to another valley running north and south, and the wide open vale thus formed is the “Vale of Sorek” (Judges xvi. 4), the topographical setting of the stories of Samson. On the southern slope of the valley, occupying a low hill close to the railway, lies *Aim Shems*, the site of Bethshemesh, famous for the

incident of the return of the "Ark" by the panic-stricken Philistines (1 Sam. vi. 9). This site was excavated by the P.E.F. shortly before the outbreak of war, and its ancient walls and gates were completely laid bare. Some three miles south-west of *Aim Shems* lies *Tibneh*, the Timnah of Judges xiv. 1f. On the opposite side of the valley lies the dominating lofty hill of *Sorah*, the "Zorah" of the Old Testament, where Samson was born, and a couple of miles north-east is *Eshua* or *Eshtaol* (Judges xvi. 31), near which he was buried. The vale here is open, and in the spring, when clothed with corn, is an attractive contrast to the barren mountain gorges of Judæa. Once it was rich in vineyards, and old wine-presses are plentiful in the hills around.

The railway, after following the valley to a little beyond the station of *Sejed*, traverses some slightly higher ground to *Naameh*, whence it runs almost due north to *Ramleh*, a little under three miles. Due east of *Naameh* is the village of *Abu Shusheh*, on the isolated hill *Tell el-Jezereh*. This is the site of the once famous Gezer, the guard city of the entrance into the mountains of Judæa by any of these valleys, either the *Wady Surar*, the *Wady Ali* (up which the Jaffa-Jerusalem road now goes), or the Valley of *Ajalon*—the historic route of armies to Jerusalem. Of this city George Adam Smith writes:

"Within sight of every Egyptian and every Syrian invasion of the land, Gezer has also seen Alexander pass by and the Legions of Rome in unusual flight, and the armies of the Cross struggle, waver, and give way, and Napoleon come and go. If all could rise who have fallen round its base—Ethiopians, Hebrews, Assyrians, Arabs, Turcomans, Greeks, Romans, Celts,



Saxons, Mongols—what a rehearsal of the Judgment Day it would be. Few of the travellers who now rush across the Plain realise that the first conspicuous hill they pass in Palestine is also one of the most thickly haunted—even in that narrow land—into which history has so crowded itself.”

On November 15th the “tell” witnessed a new race fighting upon its slopes, when British Yeomanry charged the Turks entrenched there—capturing 360 and killing over 400.

The whole summit of *Tell-el-Jezereh* was excavated a few years ago by Professor R. A. S. McAlister on behalf of the P.E.F., and the amount of knowledge accumulated by these five years’ excavations has added more to the archæology of Palestine than all the other excavations made in that land. Probably the very trenches which he left after his excavations were occupied by the Turks. The railway passes from Ramleh to Lydda and thence to Jaffa.

To return to the *Wady Surir*. The valley passes westward between *Katrah* on the south (the ancient Gederoth, Josh. xv. 41; 2 Chron. xxviii. 18), now a village and a Jewish colony, and *El Mughar* on the north, while Ekron, the modern *Akir*, also a Jewish colony, lies another three miles further north. A little further on the valley turns sharply to the north, and after three miles, where there is a bridge for the high road, lies *Yebnah*, now but a hamlet, but the site of the famous Jewish town of Jamnia, once on a time the meeting-place of the Jewish Sanhedrin. In the Old Testament it was called Jabneh (Josh. xv. 11), and in the days of the Crusaders it was *Ibelin*, the strong fortress Ibelin; one of the village mosques to-day was originally a crusading church. The ancient city had

a sea-port of the same name at the mouth of the Wady, where now the River *Rubin* empties itself into the sea.

The western border of the Philistine Plains is separated from the Judæan mountains by a very striking stretch of hill country known as "The Shephelah." The origin of this curious belt lies in the existence here of what geologists know as a "fault" in the rocks, which has resulted in an almost abrupt division between the low fertile hills of the west and the more barren, steeper mountains of the east. The division is marked by a series of valleys running north and south, which skirt the mountains. The most marked of these are the *Wady es-Sur*, *Wady en-Najil*, and the *Wady el-Ghurab*. West of this line the country is marked by its fertility, its plentiful water supply, and its extraordinarily abundant caves—notably around *Beit-Jebrin*. The valleys we have just been describing pass right across this district, and it is in this country that the Hebrews had—in the days of the Judges and the early kings—many stern fights against the Philistines, and, in later ages, under the Maccabees, against the Greeks. So much that has been said about the valleys themselves from their military aspect will apply equally to the district in which the valleys run, so that it is unnecessary here to do more than make passing reference to this region.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CITIES OF THE MIDDLE MARITIME PLAIN

**R**AMLEH, Lydda, and Jaffa, the most populated centres in the maritime plain, are, under present conditions, clearly indefensible against modern artillery. Lying in the middle of level, highly cultivated ground, with no natural defence at all, it is not wonderful that when the British forces reached their environs they were each in turn evacuated without any special effort at defence—the Turks retiring to the line of the *el Auja* river and extending their line eastward into the mountains of Judæa.

Jaffa, the largest of the three towns, is at present the most important sea-port on the coast of Palestine, although being rapidly outrivalled by Haifa, on the Bay of Akka. Perhaps the thing for which Jaffa is most famous—or infamous—is its extreme badness as a port; it stands lowest on the list at Lloyds in this respect. In ancient times there was a harbour suited for small sailing ships, but the inner harbour, which was artificially made, has long ago silted up. The outer harbour, protected by a series of jagged reefs, is useless for any but quite small boats, and steamers have to anchor without any kind of protection a mile from the shore. During the stormy winter months it is quite common for steamers to have to pass the port without landing cargoes or passengers, and at such times Jerusalem has been without any European mail for two weeks or more because of the impos-



sibility of communicating with the shore. This will be improved in the future; firstly, because the connection of Palestine with Egypt, now made by the railway through the desert, is sure to be a permanent one; and secondly, because Haifa, which has many natural advantages, will be improved ere long into a modern port—so that there will be at least two routes for mails which will not be affected by stormy weather.

Jaffa was anciently a Phœnician colony, and though the meaning of the name "*Japho*" is unknown, it has been interpreted by Hebrew analogy as meaning "beautiful." The old myth of Perseus and Andromeda had its setting here, and it was in these seas, according to tradition, that Jonah was swallowed by the sea monster (Jonah i. 3). Both these tales found local confirmation in early times. Even as late as the Middle Ages the chains of Andromeda were shown attached to rocks in the harbour, and the bones of Jonah's whale also lay there to confirm the faith of the sceptical. There are several references in campaigns of Thothmes III. and Sennacherib to this town, and Joppa was the port to which Hiram, King of Tyre, sent timber by sea for the Temple of Solomon (2 Chron. ii. 16).

In the days of the Maccabees Jaffa became definitely Jewish (1 Maccabees x. 74*f*), but Christianity was early introduced (Acts ix. 36), and we have the record of several Bishops and Church Synods being held there. It changed hands several times during the Crusading period; the last great military event there was its capture by the French under Kléber in 1799.

From the sea Jaffa looks exceedingly picturesque, the central part standing up on high sandhills and the whole town being surrounded by many acres of gar-

dens and irrigated orange and lemon orchards. It is still a thoroughly Oriental town—in spite of the fact that a considerable German colony made a suburb (since 1868) to the north-east. A very flourishing German colony has been established some two miles further north-east at Saron, and more recently (1892) a successful branch called Wilhelma was established near *El Yehudiyeh*, some eight miles due east of Jaffa. It may be mentioned that after the capture of this district the colonists were left undisturbed, although doubtless many of the younger men are actually fighting in the ranks of the Turkish Army. A flourishing Jewish colony has in recent years been settled in the ground to the north of Jaffa, between the railway and the sea, called *Tell Aviv*. This has been built on very much improved lines when compared with some of the older colonies, and already, before the war, it was proving an educational centre of some importance in the Jewish world, certificates from there being recognised at universities in Europe. Jaffa is really the centre of a large group of Jewish agricultural colonies, of which the most important are the Mikveh Israel, an agricultural school under the Alliance Israelite, founded in 1870 on the Jaffa-Jerusalem road; Petah Tikveh, to the north-east, founded in 1878; and the Rishon-le-Zion, some one and a half miles to the south of the same road, founded in 1882.

The extensive orange gardens depend for their existence upon water raised by either primitive water wheels, worked often by camels or donkeys, or more recently upon oil engines. The supply of water has been sadly diminished during the war from lack of fuel, and we hear that many of the orange trees have

## CITIES OF THE MIDDLE MARITIME PLAIN 23

been destroyed. Most of the oranges grown here were, before the war, exported annually to Great Britain. This industry is sure to vastly increase in the peaceful days that we hope lie in the near future.

Lydda, called in the Arabic "Ludd," is the "Lod" of Ezra ii. 33. It rose to considerable prominence under the Maccabees, and in Roman times received the name Diospolis. Christianity found adherents there in its earliest days (Acts ix. 32), and it became the seat of a Bishopric. Its chief claim to fame is the tradition that here St. George was buried, and in the sixth century a church was built over his tomb, which, after many destructions and rebuildings, still exists to-day, although part of the ancient church is now used as a mosque.

Ramleh, some two miles distant, is of early foundation, and became a city of importance in the eighth century A.D. It was very prosperous in the Middle Ages, and in the days of the Crusaders was the seat of a Bishopric. The large Mosque which exists there was once a Christian church. Near the town is a handsome and conspicuous tower, the Jamia El-Abyad, which was once attached to a large mosque, only the outlines of the foundations of which are now visible. The tower is more like a Romanesque building than the conventional Minaret of a Mosque.

The whole district round Lydda and Ramleh is an oasis of fertility with large groves of splendid olive trees besides fruit trees of all descriptions. The prickly pear (cactus), originally introduced from America, is much used for making hedges, and in this sandy soil grows to a great height. Many graceful palm trees scattered about among the buildings of Ramleh add greatly to its picturesqueness.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE BRITISH CAMPAIGN

IT will be convenient at this point to recall the incidents of General Allenby's rapid advance over this historic ground. The long and weary months of preparation were spent by the gradual accumulation of a splendid force of seasoned and trained men. There were many Battalions of infantry from all parts of Britain and Ireland. Then there were the Yeomanry from many counties of England — from London, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Dorsetshire — who were casting longing eyes over the distant, fertile plains. Then there were the mounted Anzacs, the men from Australia and New Zealand, by this time completely inured to desert warfare. And lastly, Indian and West Indian troops, made, with the French and Italian contingents, a composite force. Artillery, ammunition and stores were by now accumulated in overflowing abundance.

On October 26th, 1917, the final preparations for the advance commenced. The railway was pushed forward from *Shellal*, fourteen miles south of Gaza on the *Wady Ghuzzeh*, towards *Karm* in the direction of Beersheba. Another branch was run to another point on the Beersheba road, *el Baggar*, and arrangements for watering the troops were made at *Wady Asluj*, sixteen miles south-east of Gaza. These movements were not unperceived by the Turks, who made a

great attack with two regiments of cavalry and some two battalions of infantry against *Karm*, but were beaten off with great gallantry by our London Yeomanry Brigade. The same day a fierce bombardment of the Gaza defences was commenced from the sea.

On the night of October 30th, mounted troops were got into position on the north-east of Beersheba, while infantry in the early dawn of the 31st were marched to positions on the south-west. The attack was commenced at an early hour, and before evening, after fierce fighting, the position was captured. Among the outlying fortified posts was *Tell es Saba*, the before-mentioned site of Beersheba or Sheba of the Canaanite time. A number of German machine gunners had to be cleared off this site. On November 1st, the infantry moved nine miles to the north of Beersheba, and mounted troops pushed forward to within four miles of *edh Dhaheriyeh*. Meanwhile some of our infantry moved into a position north-west of Beersheba in the neighbourhood of *Abu Irgeig*. Thus the capture of the eastern end of the long fortified line of the Turkish defence was now complete.

At the western end on the morning of November 2nd, British infantry advanced and captured a hill nicknamed "Umbrella Hill," some 500 yards west of the *Dir el-Belah-Gaza* road and proceeded to take the whole of the Gaza first line defences between there and the sea. In this attack they were assisted by the "Tanks."

On November 6th, our infantry north of Beersheba at *Ain Kohle* advanced two miles to the Turkish position at *Khuwelifeh*, while dismounted Yeomanry and Irish and London infantry, advancing from the neighbourhood of *Abu Irgeig*, captured the whole of



the Turkish lines up to *Abu Hareira*. By nightfall a general retreat of the Turks had commenced, the British infantry and mounted troops pursuing them towards Jemmameh and Huj. The eastern line having now completely given way, the attack on Gaza was renewed at midnight on the 6th, and the city was captured without much opposition; the British left wing—Scottish infantry—pushing forward through the heavy sand dunes with great energy the same night towards the mouth of Wady Hesya: they at once attacked the Turks entrenched on the north bank, although it was then dark, and captured the position by midnight. Other battalions advancing along the high road further east met with most determined opposition at Deir Sincid, further east the banks of the same Wady, the enemy counter-attacking four times before being driven out. Still further to the east mounted troops, Anzacs and others, pushed northwards from *Sheria*, and took *Tell es Sheria* the next morning at 4.30.

Meanwhile at *Attawiney*, some seven miles from Gaza on the Beersheba road, the Turks still made a show of resistance, but by the 8th they retired, and thus the whole line of original defence passed into our hands.

The advance now became rapid. During November 8th mounted troops—the Warwickshire and Worcestershire Yeomanry—reached the middle course of the *Wady Hesya* passing *Tell-el-Hesya*. They captured Huj in a brilliant action, in which they took twelve guns, three machine guns, and 100 prisoners, the accumulated stores in the town having been set on fire by the retreating Turks. After a brilliant action by the Indian Imperial Service Cavalry in *Beit Hanun*, the

terminus of the Gaza branch of the railway was captured, with large stores of heavy gun ammunition, the retreating troops being harassed by the Royal Flying Corps with machine guns and bombs.

On the 9th mounted troops moved forward rapidly, through *Askelon* and *El Mejdel* successively, and by night reached *Esdud* (Ashdod) further inland; at *et Tineh*, where the retreating Turks set fire to enormous stores at the railway junction, the Australians were in time to save and capture a vast booty.

On the 11th, although the mounted troops had proceeded a good deal further north, our infantry had to clear a strong body of Turks out of the village of *Beit Duras*, a little on the southern edge of the *Wady Sukreir*, along which ravine 13,000 Turks had been frantically entrenching themselves to resist our advance. The retreat by now had become in many parts precipitate. A correspondent wrote at this time:

"I have been over many miles of battlefield, and saw everywhere many wagons and an enormous amount of undestroyed gun ammunition, in places piles of field and heavy gun shells in boxes and wicker crates. I hear that a number of exploded dumps are to be found all over the country."—(W. T. MASSEY, in *The Daily Telegraph*.)

The next day, after a desperate fight at *Burkah*, where the Turks had to be driven out of a strongly fortified post with two lines of trenches, the enemy occupied the general line from the mouth of the *Wady Sukereir*, twelve miles north of *Askelon*, running south-east to *Beit-Jabrin*, the line being considerably more advanced near the coast than further east. Still further east our troops in the mountains had captured *edh Dhaheriyeh*.

The next day, November 13th, was a day of fierce fighting, the Turks making a brave and obstinate resistance to our advance along their chosen line. *El Mesmiyeh*, *Katrah* and *Mughan* were each taken after heavy fighting. Here the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Dorsetshire Yeomanry greatly distinguished themselves, and by coming to the assistance of the Scottish infantry captured 1,500 prisoners, twenty machine guns and four guns, and 400 Turks were buried after the action. Our line was thus advanced from *et Tineh* through *Katrah*, to *Yebnah* in the West.

By the 14th our troops occupied the *Wady Rubin*, with its narrow flowing stream, and due east of this seized the railway in the vicinity of *Naameh* and *El Mansurah*, including the junction with the central railway from the north.

The next day, the 15th, our troops after slight resistance occupied the line *Ramleh* and *Ludd* and reached some three miles south of Jaffa. At *Abu Shusheh* (Gezer) the Yeomanry captured this historic site, as has been described already.

On the 17th, Australian and New Zealand troops captured at *Ludd* (Lydda) 300 prisoners and four machine guns, and later occupied Jaffa without opposition. The area now reached was fairly thickly populated, as numbers of the fellahin had been removed there from the neighbourhood of Gaza by the Turks.

The picture of the welcome received by the troops is very delightful:

"The people turned out by the Turks from Gaza and the surrounding country were trekking back with all their worldly goods and chattels packed on over-



loaded camels and donkeys, the women bearing astonishingly heavy loads on their heads, while the patriarchs of families rode, or were carried on the shoulders of the younger men. The agriculturists are beginning to turn out to plough and till the fields, now they have the security of British protection. Our troops receive the liveliest welcome in passing the villages, and in this unchanging part of the world the women sit and gossip during the process of drawing water from the well, just as they did in Biblical days, unhindered by the war's progress, though not heedless of it. There is peace and safety for them all.

"This end to extortion, oppression, and pillage under the name of requisitions has, in the short space of a week, wrought a wondrous change in the happiness and contentment of the people.

"The German propaganda has failed miserably here.

"British ideals of freedom are thoroughly known, and the exemplary behaviour of our troops has confirmed all previous knowledge of the work done by Great Britain for civilisation.

"To say that this country, which a fortnight ago was under the Turkish scourge and war, has suddenly become normal for the civil population, is not to use words of exaggeration. In Ramleh people are practising the arts of peace and the bazaars are busy. Our Yeomanry are buying Jaffa oranges, vegetables, and fresh bread, a welcome change from the diet of a fortnight's strenuous times, at fair rates, the traders receiving payment in cash, an alteration from the depreciated Turkish note to which they are accustomed."

—W. T. MASSEY, in *The Daily Telegraph*.

Ramleh, Lydda and Jaffa and the villages around being now secured, an advance was made towards Jerusalem itself. The historic pass through the Vale

of Ajalon was followed by our cavalry, who reached *Beit-Ur-el-Tahta* (lower Bethoran) on November 18th, and worked their way in contact with the enemy four miles west of *Beria*; after reaching *Beitunia*, which commands the Northern road, they had again to fall back to *Beit-Ur-el-Folia* (Bethoran the Upper). Meanwhile, by the 19th, infantry had with heavy fighting advanced to *Kuryet-el-Enab*, six miles west of Jerusalem, and *Beit Likia*, on the road from the Vale of Ajalon towards *El Kukeibeh* (Emmaus), and by the 21st the lofty dominating mountain of *Nebi Samuel*, the site of the traditional tomb of the Prophet Samuel, was stormed. In trying to drive out the British the Mosque over the tomb seems to have been destroyed, which is not remarkable, as its lofty position would have given the British a unique point of vantage.

## CHAPTER VII

### ADVANCE ON JERUSALEM

THE campaign takes on a new aspect when it turns from the occupation of the Maritime Plain to the investment of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem lies high up, some 2,450 feet above the Mediterranean, in the plateau of central Judæa. In the days of ancient warfare its military strength lay largely in the deep valleys almost surrounding its site, and the powerful walls rising from these valley slopes made the city almost impregnable from all sides but the north, where the absence of a valley was, in Roman times, compensated for by a triple wall.

The line of defence of Jerusalem now lies far out from the city. From the south, in past history, the desert and the almost waterless *Negeb* have been such a defence that directly from this direction the inhabitants of Jerusalem might well think themselves secure. "No army of invasion, knowing that opposition awaited them on the Judæan frontier, would venture across those steep and haggard ridges. . . . Hence we find Judæa almost never invaded from the south."—(G. A. Smith.) But this present war has entirely altered the conditions. In earlier invasions the army had behind them but a waterless desert; now, thanks partly to the Turks themselves, the British Army has an excellent road from Beersheba northwards, and railway tracks connect this town southwards with *el Auja*, and eastwards with Gaza and the

maritime plain. As the British Army advanced very early to *edh Dhahriyeh* they had before them a straight high road to the vine-clad valleys of Hebron. From Hebron to the neighbourhood of Bethlehem the road traverses the ridge of the water shed, and is by no means difficult; there are no deep gorges or precipitous gulleys, and in many places the valleys open out into small plateaux. There is water at several places—at *Ain ed Dirweh*, traditionally the spot where Philip baptised the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts viii. 36); at *Wady el-Arrub*, from which water was in Roman times conducted to Jerusalem by aqueduct; and at the springs and pools known as the Pools of Solomon. There are, of course, on this route many hills which dominate the road, but they can be easily enfiladed from the east or west. As will be seen in what follows, the greater part of this route of approach to the city, viz., past the Pools of Solomon, and Bēthlehem, is one which can be initiated from the west. Bethlehem itself lies on a rocky spur running east of the main road, actually out of the line of advance, but connected with the carriage way by a good road. Through Bethlehem various roads pass eastwards to the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley.

With respect to the western approach, Judæa always had natural defences of considerable strength, a fact which has had great bearing on the survival and isolation of the Hebrew race in the days when other small races succumbed to either Assyria or Egypt. Of all the western defiles "few are straight, most of them sharply curved. The sides are steep and even precipitous, frequently with no path between save for the rough torrent bed arranged in rapids of loose shingle or in level steps of the limestone strata, which at the

mouth of the defile are often tilted almost perpendicularly into really difficult obstacles of passage. The sun beats fiercely down upon the limestone, the springs are few, though sometimes very generous, a low thick bush fringes all the brows, and caves abound in tumbled rocks."—(G. A. Smith.)

The northernmost of the passes that start in the Vale of Ajalon is the one which, all through history, has been associated with great battles. Passing from the level plains around Gezer, *Wady Selman*, or the Valley of Ajalon, runs north-eastward into the mountains, and from the most eastern end of the wide valley three paths ascend into the hills. Of these the most famous is that by the two Beth-Horons, along which historic battles have been waged of great importance. Here Joshua fought the Canaanites and drove them in headlong slaughter to the plains (Josh. x. 10). When the Philistines were opposing King Saul at Geba they sent a company of their men to hold the way to Beth-Horon (I Sam. xiii. 16ff). By route the first Crusaders reached Jerusalem in two days. It was the great high road into the heart of the land from the earliest times to three or four centuries ago, and history repeats itself as we read that the British troops reach *Beit-Ur-el-Tahta* and *Beit-Ur-el-Foka*, the two Beth-Horons. This pass opens upon the plateau of Judæa north of the lofty ridge of Nebi Samuel, and thus reaches the Central Jerusalem-Nablus road, some four miles due north of the city. Another road from the *Wady Selman* passes through *Beit Likia* and *el-Kubeibeh* to *Nebi Samuel* itself, and by this road *Kuriet el-Enab*, on the Jaffa-Jerusalem high road, can easily be reached, thus avoiding the difficulties of *Wady Ali*. South of this pass is *Wady*



*Ali*, up which the Jaffa-Jerusalem road finds its way. The entrance to the mountain at *Bab el-Wad*, literally the "Gate of the Valley," is a narrow gorge between high mountains; this gate, and the first few miles of the road where it runs between high steep hills, would be quite impassable if any adequate defence was put up, and report says that it was strongly fortified. There are, however, at points (besides the one mentioned above) narrow paths which ascend the hills and reach the high road after it leaves this valley either at *Saris* or a little further east at *Kuryet-el-Enab*. From these places to Jerusalem the road, though rising and falling several times, is by no means impassable for an army. After crossing the deep valley at *Kulonyeh*, situated in the deep northern arm of the *Wady el-Suras*, two routes are possible, one to the south by the old road (now much out of repair), another to the north of the main more modern road, and both converge just before the first houses of Jerusalem begin. The third pass, *Wady es Surar*, has already been described, and it may be said at once that this deep winding gorge would be quite impossible as a route of military approach unless the hills on each side were first seized, and it is certain that great resistance will be offered to the Army obtaining possession to so vital a thing as the railway. The fourth pass is the *Wady es Sunt*, known of old as the Vale of Elah; the higher reaches of this valley, known as the *Wady es Sur*, run due north and then east, reaching the hill country near *Beit Sur*, the ancient Beth-Zur (Josh. xv. 58; Neh. iii. 16). This route has been used several times by armies, the most famous invasion being that of Antiochus III., who with Lysias as his general, led the Syrian Army, accompanied by ele-



phants, up this route and defeated Judas Maccabeus at Beth Zacharya, near the *Wady el-Arrub* (1 Macc. vi. 32*f.*). Richard, King of England, in the third Crusade, attempted this route after failing to reach Jerusalem through the Vale of Ajalon. An attack on Jerusalem after the plateau is reached is one from the south, as contrasted with that through the Vale of Ajalon approaches from the north.

After the first rush up the plains and the rapid seizure of the western approaches to Jerusalem a necessary pause occurred while supplies were brought up and the lines of communication were improved. It was necessary to improvise some roads into the mountains to bring up the artillery. All this took time, while the onset of the heavy winter's rains increased the difficulties of transport. Meanwhile the British Army held a long line running from the mouth of the river Aujeh the west—westwards and south-westwards into the hill country. Here, the centre and most actively attacking force held the line of the Beth Horon pass from el Burj—the site of an old crusading fort, erected by Richard Cœur de Lion, to protect this very road—past the two Beth Horons, southwards past the great mountain of Nebi Samuel—which dominates all the country round—to Ain Kairem and Bettir. Both these two last sites have the best springs of water in the whole district. Ain Kairem is a beautiful little town, by tradition the birthplace of John the Baptist, and here there is a charming settlement of Russian nuns built amid groves of cypresses and other trees. From Ain Kairem to Jerusalem there is a good carriage road. Bettir is important as the last station on the railway as Jerusalem is approached. It was the site of a great Jewish tragedy when (A.D.

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135) the last remaining followers of the false Messiah Bar Cochba, who had raised rebellion against Rome, were besieged and finally massacred so that, it is said, the place ran with torrents of blood. The ancient site is known as Khirbet el Yahud, the Jews' ruin.

The extreme right of the Army meanwhile occupied edh Dhahariyeh, ancient Debir, and an extended line held the western passes between.

The western (left) end of the attacking force continued to be held back by the Nahr Aujeh—probably they only intended to protect what had been gained. This river is the largest and southernmost of the short low-lying streams, with marshy banks liable after rain to overflow, which traverse the Plain of Sharon from east to west. It has formed a military barrier before, as when Alexander Jannæus tried in vain to fortify this line to resist the advance of Antiochus. Several skirmishes occurred here, and on one occasion Australian mounted troops captured at Birket el Jamus "the pool of the Buffaloes," a number of Turks.

The central attacking force was heavily engaged for several days. At el Burj, on a ridge overlooking the pass, the Turkish forces, to the number of 600, at one time reached the thinly guarded British trenches, but were counter-attacked and almost annihilated.

Beit ur et Foka changed hands several times and eventually proved to be a place impossible to hold on either side as long as the heights around were held by opposing parties. The lofty mountain of Nebi Samuel—the site of the traditional tomb of Samuel and by many considered that of Mizpah—dominates the country round for miles. British troops early captured the site and entrenched themselves against

the most determined attacks, the opposing forces being in places on the steep hillsides but forty yards apart. The recently rebuilt shrine crowning the hill, which had been occupied as a place of refuge by the Mohammedans of the neighbouring village, was entirely destroyed by Turkish gunfire. It might have been more "pious" to leave it, but it would hardly have been war, as it affords the finest look-out of all.

While the Turks were heavily engaged from the west the right wing commenced to fold in from the south. This seemed from the first to present the most favourable approach—under modern conditions. Hebron was occupied on December 8th. This ancient city, sacred to Moslems, Jews and Christians as the site of the Cave of Machpelah where were buried Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their wives, lies in the Wady el Khulil amid wide spreading vineyards, fertile fields and abundant springs. It lies high-over 3,000 feet above sea level, and is surrounded by still loftier hills. From Hebron to Jerusalem, though there are many "ups and downs," the road—an excellent carriage road—is mainly a descent. The Army rapidly advanced—probably the Turks were too much occupied on their extended front to concentrate great forces on this new attack. Bethlehem and Beit Jala, with their great forests of olive-trees, were passed and from here the approaches to the city, both from the south and—by detaching troops eastwards—from the Jordan Valley in the east, were cut. Meanwhile the central forces had reached the northern Jerusalem-Nablus road, and the city being thus isolated it surrendered to General Allenby. The following day he, accompanied by French, Italian and Mohammedan representatives, entered the Holy City in triumph.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MODERN JERUSALEM

**M**ODERN Jerusalem is a strange conglomeration of various elements. It is at once eastern and western; it is at once Christian, Jewish and Moslem. It is sacred to all those religions; so sacred that no one dare to contemplate that it should be dominated by the others. Rivalry between the great religions is even reproduced within those religions themselves. Thus we see it in the rivalry of the various branches of the Catholic Church; in the rivalry of Sunnite and Shiite among the Moslems, and in the rivalry between the orthodox and the reformed, between the purely religious and purely nationalistic Jew. Then added to this we see representatives of all European nations living there outvieing one another in their desire for political preponderance, seeking to impress the Turk, either with their friendliness to him, or with their power (which is more successful) by an overbearing manner in demanding redress of grievances.

Such a city must be largely cosmopolitan, and the variety of dress and costume, of outlook on life and of habit of life, is enormous. It is calculated that not less than fifty languages and dialects are spoken daily in the streets of Jerusalem, and it must be admitted that the task of the Turk, in striving to keep in order a city of such various, such rival and such divided interests has been no light one. It is well known that he has had to keep order at such sacred sites as the

Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem by placing armed Turkish soldiers there as guards.

The capitulations, a code of privileges, obtained from the Turks by the great Powers, whereby the subjects of those Powers were not in ordinary affairs liable for punishment at the Turkish courts, have given rise in increasing measure during recent years to the most extraordinary abuses. Every Power, however small, is represented by a Consul or Vice-Consul, which in the case of the smaller Powers has very often been a man who has had no previous connection with the country he represents nor even knows its language, and yet he obtains for himself substantial privileges. He can import goods for his private use free of duty, has the privilege of having a Turkish soldier or "cavass" marching with him and enjoys considerable immunity from any kind of jurisdiction on the part of the Turks. In the same way the privileges which were granted originally to Catholic monks and nuns of freedom from duty for those goods which were needed in their work, have by the pressure of the Protestant Powers been extended to the missionaries, teachers and doctors connected with all the missions established in the city.

It thus comes about that the foreign element, consisting largely of consular people, the members of Religious Orders and the agents of many missions, were to a large extent exempt from taxation on imported goods. The unfortunate native merchant is obliged to pay very heavy duties, and generally heavy *bachshesh*, for goods on which he hopes to make a profit sale to the very people, in many instances, who could get the same goods duty free. These privileges



were also abused on not a few occasions by unscrupulous consular agents importing into the country things altogether forbidden, such transactions being assisted by the universal custom of bachsheshing the officials. The state of the post has been very extraordinary. Besides a very inefficient Turkish post there are separate postal services—each with special stamps—belonging to the Austrians, Germans, French, Russians and Italians.

Christianity in Jerusalem cannot be said to appear, looking broadly at it, in a very pleasing light. The various ancient branches of the Church—many of whom, like the Greek, the Armenian and the Copt, have held their own amidst constant persecution and oppression from the Moslem—have sunk to a low educational level. The propaganda of the Latin Church has, from the Crusading times, always largely been carried on among these Eastern Churches, and by a spirit of compromise she has established a kind of half-way house between them and herself by establishing a Greek Catholic Church as contrasted with the Greek Orthodox Church, an Armenian Catholic Church as contrasted with the Armenian Orthodox Church, and others such. It must be admitted that the standard of education in these two Eastern Catholic Churches is decidedly higher than in the Orthodox. At the same time the Roman Catholic Church has herself large establishments in Palestine with able men presided over by a "Patriarch," and she has undoubtedly accomplished great things, but the rivalry between her and the Eastern Churches is none the less on that account. The Anglican Church has long been working in Jerusalem and has had a Bishop ever since 1842. Nowadays, if not so much



in the past, her efforts are concentrated upon establishing good relations with the Greek Church and upon working among Moslems and Jews educationally and medically. There are very few Protestant sects that are not, to some degree, represented in the Holy City—even Mormons, Christian Scientists and Seventh Day Adventists. “Cranks” of all kinds seem to gravitate there and find the atmosphere a congenial one.

The first impression, indeed, that the traveller receives on a visit to Jerusalem is not one conducive to the deepening of religious feeling. On all sides he is surrounded by places which claim to be the site of some Biblical incident. Many obviously are spurious, others he finds on study have little real claim to genuineness. If his visit is a short one he will in all probability leave the city with no impression beyond that of the strange medley of life and a jumble of “holy sites,” and will find possibly in other parts of Palestine—in Bethlehem or in the rest and quiet of the Lake of Galilee—the satisfaction of his religious instincts for which Jerusalem seems to have none to give. But for those who are willing to study and think, there is even in Jerusalem a perennial source of interest which even long years spent there, as by the writer, who has resided there, on and off, for over twenty years, cannot exhaust; the fascination of it all will grow they will realise that if the mere ecclesiastical sites have no appeal to reason, they have around them places indubitably associated with a thousand incidents in history, sacred and profane, which makes every outlook in and around the city of deepest interest. For example, no one disputes the great valleys that surround the city, the Valley of Hinnom on the west, the

Valley of the Kidron on the east, the so-called Virgins' Fountain, once the site of Gihon, and the Birket Silwan or Pool of Siloam, or the aqueduct connecting the two, undoubtedly the work of Hezekiah.

The Mount of Olives, disfigured to-day by a great Russian tower and the newer German tower of the Kaiserin Augusta Victoria Hospice, is still a spot of sacred memory. Below in the Valley of the Kidron, if not in the identical spot now shown at least near it, lies the Garden of Gethsemane. On the eastern side of the Mount of Olives lies that marvellous view of the Wilderness of Judæa, the plains of the Jordan, the Dead Sea and the great long mountain mass of Moab bounding the horizon.

The city walls, although but an erection of Suleiman the Magnificent in the sixteenth century, are still picturesque, and run in many places on the lines of the walls of 2,000 years ago. The ancient course of the walls at this and still earlier ages, where they run south, can be followed to-day through the excavations which were made by Messrs. Bliss and Dickie on behalf of the P.E.F.

The mere study of these walls in itself will be of absorbing interest to some, when viewed in connection with that wonderful history of nearly 3,000 years. Although the Temple has disappeared the lines of the great platform marked out by Herod the Great when he wished his temple to out-rival in magnificence and size the Temple of Solomon himself, are still followed by the enclosing walls of *el Haram*, and Herod's massive foundation stones have been uncovered 80 feet below the present surface. The sacred rock which forms the centre of all this vast enclosure, and receives from the Moslem world veneration only second to

that given to Mecca, is to-day enshrined in the "Dome of the Rock," the most beautiful building in all Syria. Although no stone of Solomon's Temple can now be identified, yet on this rock once stood the brazen altar (or as some suppose the "Holy of Holies") and standing on the great platform outside, the student can still trace where lay the various courts of the Temple area. The student may still trace to-day the situation of the Zion of King David of the "Upper City," of Bezetha and the Tyropean Valley and all the various parts as described by Josephus.

If he is happy in possessing imagination, he can still, amid the modern buildings and over the now cultivated hillsides of the south, see the great Roman Jerusalem on which the eyes of Jesus rested. One man will go to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and see very little but what he considers a travesty of religion and the mutual jealousy of the churches, another of broader minded sympathy will see in this site, which however doubtful archæologically has witnessed the veneration, the tears and prayers of millions of Christians through countless generations, a place which must on that account alone be one of sacred interest.

The Jewish problem as seen in Jerusalem is one of living interest, as there a visitor will see crowded into a few square miles samples, as it were, of that scattered race from all the lands whither they have been driven, all drawn to their ancient Zion. He will realise, as probably he can never do in any other place, that stirring of the whole race Zionwards which seems to be on the eve of fulfillment—a consummation of the dreams of Jewish idealists through all the centuries of their dispersion. To the Protestant, whose

religion, if he has any, is so largely a question of reason and cold calculated thought, it is difficult indeed to enter into the spirit of the Russian peasant, who, after long years of saving the necessary money to pay the journey, tramps many a hundred mile through the plains of Russia and at last, amid discomforts innumerable, reaches the goal of his hopes in the Holy Sepulchre. The desire of many such is to be buried in the Holy City or Land, and only a few years ago, after a snow storm in the passes not far north of Jerusalem, no less than twenty-six Russian pilgrims perished amidst the snow. One cannot help thinking largely because they made little effort to save themselves. Every year the Russian pilgrim passes from Jerusalem to Jericho, to be baptised in the Jordan in the shroud in which he wishes to be buried. Something of the emotional spirit which prompts all this is reproduced in Stephen Graham's "*With the Russian Pilgrims in Jerusalem.*"

It is not only Russian pilgrims that thus feel the spirit of the place. Any Eastertide processions of French pilgrims may be seen passing up the rough steep streets of the Via Dolorosa to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, carrying on their shoulders a great wooden cross, striving in their way to realise the pilgrimage of Him who first carried His cross for their sakes.

For the student of archæology, Jerusalem is the centre of great and perhaps increasing importance. Here the P.E.F., the American School of Archæology, the German Biblical Oriental School and the French Dominican University of St. Etienne all have their headquarters. The first has chiefly been engaged in making excavations in Jerusalem and in other parts of

Palestine, and is only represented in the Holy City by a museum, a library, and occasional lectures. The other three receive students for varying periods, who reside there, and take up various branches of study connected either with the Bible or Oriental life. The American Society is supported by several American Universities, and annually sends a distinguished Professor of Theology. Archæology, or Semitic studies, with students who pass the greater part of the year with him in the study of the land and of the people. Undoubtedly the near future will see the rise in Jerusalem of a great Jewish University which will form the centre of Jewish intellectual culture, both religious and secular. Indeed with humbler beginnings Jerusalem has been for long a considerable educational centre, only marred by the fact that education has been in so many languages and under the auspices of so many nationalities that the people of the land have been led too much to look towards countries outside their own for their intellectual outlook. Strange anomalies occur, as when in the best Jewish School the boys under the *Alliance Israelite* are taught French as their chief language, while the girls, whom presumably they will make their wives, are educated at the Evelina de Rothschild English School, in English! This babel of tongues among the Jews the Zionists hope to remedy by the revival of colloquial Hebrew, already much used in the Jewish Agricultural Colonies, as the living language among the Jews of Palestine.

Besides education, Jerusalem has become a centre for many hospitals, not less than fifteen being established there, representing all the leading nationalities in the place. The first hospital started there was that



of the English Mission Hospital, started in 1842, at the same time as the Anglican Bishopric, and for many years the medical officer of this hospital was the only civilian doctor practising in the place. In the past this hospital has, since the erection of the German hospital, been used chiefly for the Jews, but being under the auspices of an English Mission, has been prejudiced consequently in the eyes of the Jews, both Orthodox and Reformed. It is probable that after the war it will be restarted on a broader basis. The Jews now are provided with four good hospitals of their own and there are many Jewish doctors. There is a British Ophthalmic hospital run by the British Order of the Knights of St. John, and also efficient German, French, Russian, and Italian hospitals, the last not quite finished when the war began. A hospital under the Moravians, exclusively for lepers, is, too, doing a most beneficent work. The sickness in Jerusalem is very great, but most of it is due to preventable causes, especially Malaria and Infectious Specific Fevers. The scantiness of the water supply and the entire absence of anything that can be called scientific drainage has done much to retard progress. The drainage can easily be remedied in a city situated so high with deep valleys in the immediate neighbourhood.

Shortly before the war an "International Health Bureau" was started in Jerusalem and made an excellent beginning. One of the first duties under the new *régime* must be to make Jerusalem, as it undoubtedly may be made, a healthy city. The climate, although hot during the day in the long rainless summer, is healthy compared with the lower ground in Palestine. The late spring and early autumn are trying from the prevalence of the hot, dry, east wind, the *Sirocco*. The



winter is cold with a heavy rainfall, sometimes as much as thirty or forty inches, and sometimes heavy snow, yet it is bracing and in intervals between the spells of rain there are glorious days of cloudless sunshine and pleasant breezes.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FUTURE OF PALESTINE

IT is hardly possible to imagine that, whatever the future destiny of Palestine may be, it could ever return to the hands of those who have so utterly abused their trust, as the Turks. It is not because the Turks have attacked the British that they wish, in any spirit of revenge, to remove them from the land which they have held so long. The individual Turk has fought as a brave soldier, and in not a few respects with cleaner hands than his Prussian masters. The British soldier can respect bravery wherever he sees it, certainly not the least in an enemy; and there are many records of what the soldier calls a "sportsmanlike" spirit on the part of the Turk that has done him credit. But all this does not qualify the corrupt and venal Turkish rulers to continue to hold in subjection and poverty a race of people, by history and by culture, in many respects, superior to themselves. The Syrian people have been loyal to the Turks to a degree that no European would have been, and in return have received nothing but oppression and robbery, and particularly during these years of war have been treated in a way that could admit of no possibility of recurrence. Their land has been wasted, and if there have been no actual massacres, undoubtedly thousands have died from starvation which, if not deliberately inflicted (as is quite possible) might at least have been easily avoided. But far beyond this, the frightful tragedy

of Armenia must for ever make it impossible that any decent-minded people could entertain the idea that the Turks are fit to rule an alien race. That the Turks should govern themselves (if the Germans ever intend to let them do so) is without objection, but that they should govern other races we must hope will never be allowed.

Any arrangement which is made for the future of Palestine must have the interest of the Syrian peoples at heart. Up to the time of the war the number of inhabitants was probably as many as the then state of the country could support, in all perhaps 600,000, of whom 75 per cent. were Moslems. To them, and to the very many Syrians, who have migrated to Egypt, the United States and other lands on account of the oppression of the Turks, this land is the land of their forefathers. Many of the emigrants will doubtless wish to return and invest capital in the land, and we may be sure that unless unjustifiable pressure is brought upon them, very few of them will wish to part with their ancestral possessions.

Next to these we have to consider the claims of the great religious bodies that are interested in Palestine. To the Moslem Jerusalem with the Temple area (the *Haram*) and to a lesser extent Hebron with its mosque over the tomb of the patriarchs, are holy places only second in sanctity to Mecca and Medena. No British Government having a voice in the disposal of the land could dream of alienating the millions of Moslems of the British Empire by in any way dispossessing the Moslem world of sites so sacred. All the details of the occupation of Jerusalem in December, 1917, have illustrated this scrupulous reverence for the holy places. The problem of Palestine is part of the great problem

of the Arab races scattered through Syria, Mesopotamia, Arabia and Egypt.

With regard to the various branches of the Christian Church, those interested in the Christian sites may well insist that in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth and along the northern shores of the Lake of Galilee the Christian Pilgrim or tourist will have free access to these spots consecrated by sentiment. It may be that from the first means will be wisely taken whereby no modern "improvements" or "developments" should destroy the picturesqueness of, and free access to, those places which mean so much to Christians. New settlements for colonies of whatever kind should be so planned and constructed as to fall in with the view that this unique land, in a sense, is the object of Christian sentiment throughout the world.

With regard to the Jews, there is every reason to hope that under the new *régime* they will have facilities as never before for colonising the land. Their colonies, even under the Turks, who put almost insuperable difficulties in the way, have made a wonderful beginning. They will all admit of further development, and various Zionist societies have already large undeveloped estates on which to found new colonies. With regard to further extensions, there is very much undeveloped land, especially in their old home, the mountain regions of Judæa — hitherto strangely neglected by the Zionists — which might doubtless be purchased very cheaply without ousting the fellahin from their own villages and the fields immediately around them. Such development will require wise and firm administration and much patience and perseverance.

Before all, development must be progressive and the

first settlers to be selected must include experienced sanitary officers, engineers, and agriculturists, who should act as pioneers for the families that will follow them as the land can support them. Much of the failure that attended the early Jewish colonisation schemes was due to haphazard selection of sites and of settlers. Sites were chosen in places quite unsuited for settlement by Europeans with their families. Settlers were sent out who had no experience of practical agriculture and still less of the conditions of life and agriculture in the East. It is most important that no system of doles like the old *Haluka* should be allowed to grow up with the new movement. With regard to the much talked of Independent Jewish State, no wiser words have been written than those in *Palestine: The Rebirth of an ancient People*, by Albert Hyamson, who is a well-known Zionist, in which the author says in conclusion:—

“The possibility of an Independent Jewish State cannot be discussed in the course of the present generation or at any date which either the writer or the reader can expect to see. Local autonomy is all that the Jews of Palestine ask—the development of the system which has already been inaugurated and whose success has been proved by experience. The Jews desire no favour as compared with other inhabitants of the land. They are willing for all the advantages of a free and liberal government to be enjoyed by all equally. Thus if Palestine ultimately becomes entirely—that is to say—overwhelmingly Jewish, it will become so, not by artificial means, but as a consequence of natural growth.”

The thorny problem of the controlling government cannot here and now be adequately discussed. That

England must make sure of a friendly government in Palestine, that she may not have over again the bitter experiences of these years of desert fighting, and command a securer frontier for Egypt, goes without saying. But England did not go into this war for aggression, and the measures she has had to take in the Turkish Empire have, without exception, been forced upon her.

Palestine has unique claims as the meeting place of all the Christian Churches, as well as of Christian, Moslem and Jew. There is much to be said for the setting up of a protected State with wide powers of controlling its own affairs by an elected assembly. It is certain that such a State would require the supervision and help of the Powers for some years—till its organisation and development were sufficiently stable to enable it to stand alone.

It would be possible and advisable to give the separate communities considerable power of internal autonomy, including the power of ecclesiastical bodies (including under this head, Moslems and Jews), to adjudicate all questions where their special laws are concerned, and in any special settlements, such as Jewish colonies, to administer justice in all but severe criminal offences among their own people, subject to appeal to a central court.

What the country needs is first a settled and just government, which should be formed with a view to eventual independence; secondly, an enlightened and international sanitary service which shall seek to eradicate the terrible plagues of malaria, black water fever, which infest some parts of the land, and the specific infectious diseases; and thirdly, capital in no stinted quantity to restore to the land something of its former



fertility, beauty and greatness. Such a restoration has been brought within the range of "practical politics" by the occupation of Jerusalem by the forces under General Allenby, and will be secured by the issues of a victorious conclusion of the war by the Allies and America. In its wonderful history and its sacred associations Palestine is a unique land on earth, and one can imagine no more holy ideal issue out of the frightful tragedy of these years than to see once again that land the abode of unity and peace and the glory of the whole earth.





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